

**WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY AN OFFICER**

**DECISION TITLE:                   EXTENSION OF INTERAUTHORITY AGREEMENT –  
TOGETHER FOR ADOPTION**

Cabinet Decision No and/or Forward Plan No (Executive decisions only)	N/A
Directorate Ref No (Non Executive decisions only) If applicable	AA/ADOPTION/DECISION/TFA/IAA EXTENSION/FEB2020
Decision detail	Decision to extend the current Inter Authority Agreement for up to two years, that being to 31 March 2022, or pending the development of a new Inter Authority Agreement details of which are currently being discussed by the Together for Adoption Partnership Management Board which will be considered a key cabinet decision.
Reason for Decision	<p>This decision is being taken at officer level following advice of the Chief Executive given the decision is an extension of a current successful partnership arrangement.</p> <p>The Education and Adoption Act 2016 made requirements for local authorities to join together to form Regional Adoption Agency by 31 March 2020.</p> <p>Warrington Borough Council has been part of a Regional Adoption Agency, Together for Adoption, with a number of other local authorities since 1 September 2017. Prior to this date Warrington was already in a smaller collaboration (WWISH – Warrington, Wigan and St Helen’s).</p> <p>Together for Adoption aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide all children who have a plan for adoption with an adoptive family that meets their needs.</li> <li>• Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted.</li> <li>• Ensure that those who are affected by adoption, receive the advice support and information they need.</li> </ul> <p>The original Inter Authority Agreement (“IAA”) was approved by Cabinet on 16 January 2017, and was thereafter signed on behalf of Warrington Borough Council on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 by Fiona</p>

Waddington, former Operational Director of Children's Social Care.

The initial term of the IAA is from 1 September 2017 until 31 March 2020 and there is the ability for extension for a further two years until 31 March 2022.

Warrington's contribution to Together for Adoption and as provided for under the terms of the IAA for the 2019/2020 year was £290,120.

Warrington's adoption performance has improved year on year since Together for Adoption was established;

- Together for Adoption matched 98 children for adoption in 2018/19, the previous year, forty-seven children were matched.
- Together for Adoption achieved 70% placements in internal placements in 2018/19, this was slightly lower than the target figure of 80%.
- On average Warrington Children's Service place 30 children for adoption each year; In 2018/19, 29 children were placed for adoption or adopted in Warrington compared to the previous year of 32.
- Warrington's performance against government 'targets' for adoption is strong.
- A1 score (the time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children, 3 year average) in 2018/19 was 464 days, compared to the target of 426. Although this was higher than government target, this was largely due to complex family finding in relation to large sibling groups and children with complex health needs. More recently, in September 2019, this has improved to 391 days, which is lower than the government target.
- The A2 score (the time between placement order and deciding on a match, 3 year average), as of 31 March 2018, was 186 days. Although this does not meet the agreed target, it is a marked improvement in performance from the previous year and very strong in comparison to other local

	<p>authority's performance.</p> <p>Warrington's children have been well served through this arrangement and it is believed it is in their best interests to move forward with the continued collaboration.</p> <p>It is therefore necessary to extend the current IAA pending detail of a new agreement being agreed by the Together for Adoption Partnership Management Board, and as stated the IAA has provision for extension and it is therefore proposed that the IAA is extended until 31 March 2020 or until such a time as a new IAA is put in place.</p> <p>The Executive Board approval of 16 January 2017 delegated the "<i>sign off an appropriate IAA to the Executive Director, Families and Wellbeing</i>" – this post no longer exists in the Council's structure, however the roles and responsibilities have transferred to Amanda Amesbury, Director – Children's Social Care (DCS). As such, pursuant to this delegated authority the IAA will be extended as set out above.</p>
Decision Maker/Responsible Officer	Amanda Amesbury, Director – Children's Social Care (DCS)
Directorate	Families and Wellbeing – Children's
Lead Cabinet Member consulted (if applicable)	Cllr M Smith, Children's Services
Decision Date	14 February 2020
Date Decision was published / notified (normally within 2 clear working days of decision being made)	14 February 2020
Summary of options considered	<p>Legally Warrington Borough Council has to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency by 31 March 2020; options are therefore limited as we cannot consider being a standalone adoption agency unless we seek exemption from the DFE. It is not in our (or our children's) best interest to do this given the success of Together for Adoption.</p> <p>The council could seek to join a different Regional Adoption Agency however given the progress and efficiency of the current arrangements this would not be an effective or best value approach to take.</p>
Interests declared	None
Background Papers	Performance reports for Together for Adoption are available for consideration.

(if applicable) <i>(period expires after 4 years from date of decision)</i>	
Confidential / exempt information Category (if applicable)	

**NB. This form expires after 6 years.**